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COMMANDER NAVAL BASE SAN DIEGO

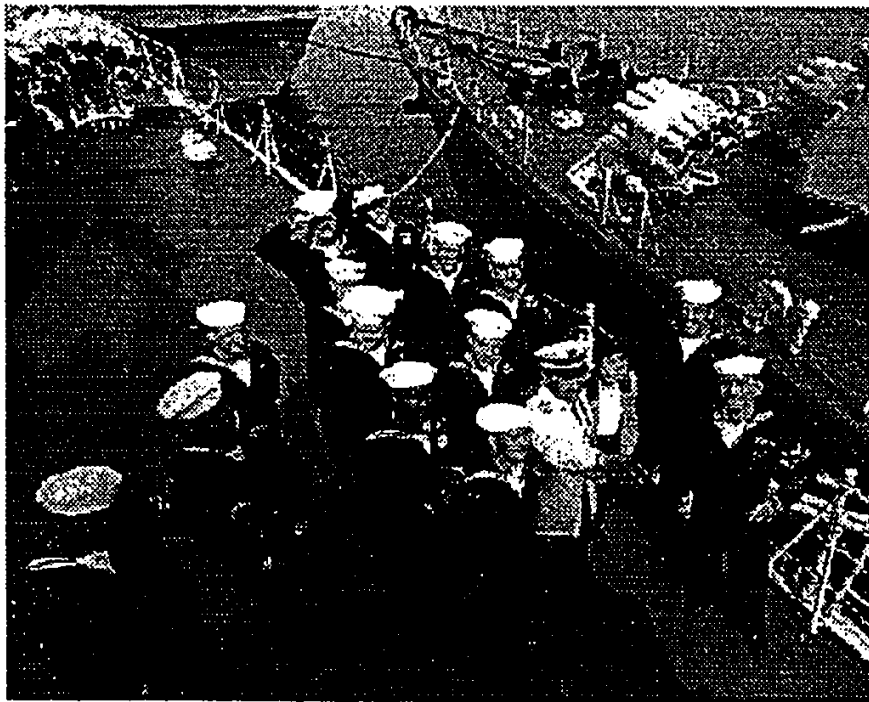


Chinese Sailors crossdeck to U.S. ships

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NORTH ISLAND - The guided-missile destroyer John Paul Jones (DDG 53) and the guided-missile frigates USS Rentz (FFG 46) and USS Lewis B. Puller (FFG 23) played host to the Sailors and officers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (Navy) guided-missile destroyers Harbin (DDG 112) and Zhuhai (DDG 116), as well as the crew of the attack oiler Nanchang (AO 953). The American Sailors aboard the Jones, Puller and Rentz were all smiles as the Chinese seamen arrived, and translators gave both groups a chance to talk freely.

The Chinese Sailors were not phased by the appearance of the U.S. Sailors or their painted ships, but were impressed by the welcome they received aboard. PLA-N Sailors looked with critical eyes at the weapons and technology of the U.S. ships, and compared every aspect of the missile-guidance radar, flush-deck weapons launchers and anti-aircraft guns to their own, initially discussing the equipment amongst themselves in small groups. As the visit continued, Sailors from both nations began to communicate without benefit of chaperons.



One Sailor from the Chinese flotilla stood near a first class petty officer on Puller's bridge, and gestured to the overhead or in other words, the ceiling. There was a thin metal bar stretched from the right side of the compartment all the way across the bridge to the left, from one side of the ship to the other. With his hands and a couple of quiet sounds, the Chinese Sailor managed to ask what the cable was for. As soon as the question was understood, the

American lifted his hands to the bar, clutched it tightly and made similar groaning noises while swaying his body to the right and to the left.

Heavy seas, hold on, not fall over. Both laughed, nodding at each other and exchanging shallow bows. The scene was repeated a few minutes later by the next tour group through the bridge.

Aboard Jones, there was a long pause in each tour as the translators stopped by the flush-deck missile launchers, and the U.S. Sailors who worked on them explained with their hands what they were for. Some of the Chinese knew what they were, and soon a conversation exclusive of the translator, an U.S. Air Force sergeant, broke out. Using hand signs and broken english, the Chinese were able to discern from the technicians what the doors covered and how the radars on the ship tracked them to their targets. Naval terms and gestures around the ship seemed more than adequate. As with music, these systems crossed the language barrier for these Sailors.

On the helicopter deck of the frigate Puller, a Chinese Sailor stared at the pair of hangar bay doors between the deck he was standing on and the hangar deck itself. He glanced up at the control room between the doors. Inside the bulletproof room was an airman, looking back through the glass. The airman motioned with his hands as though a feather was touching down on a flat surface. A rotary motion of the fingers was declarative. Message sent and received. Here there be helicopters.

At the same time, a little way down the same pier, the Chinese destroyers were open to the



public. The oiler was restricted. Americans wanted to see the destroyers anyway. Aboard the destroyer Harbin, the Chinese returned the favor to the Americans. The weapons systems were a big hit. The ship fairly bristled with gun barrels, whereas Jones lines were angular and modern. The Americans who were aboard were pleased to discover that the Chinese had the same interests as they did. Non-verbal questions about laundry services, weapon characteristics and engine capabilities were asked all over the ship s conversation

deck.

Cameras appeared as if from nowhere, and there were soon shutterbugs clicks and whirrs heard throughout the toured spaces of the destroyer. One American took a picture of two Chinese Sailors and a U.S. shipmate, using the aircraft carrier Constellation (CV 64) as a

backdrop. Smiles and bows again; mission accomplished.

The exchange visits continued for most of the morning, and seemed to do much for the breaking of ice. As the morning progressed into the afternoon, the Chinese and Americans ventured out toward one another bearing trinkets. The Chinese took with them small lapel pins bearing the Chinese and Chinese Navy flags, and the Americans brought uniform items for trade. Another international pastime of mariners properly observed. Like Sailors have done for years, the Chinese and Americans headed back to their ships with many of the detachable parts of their uniforms missing.

Both navies' representatives were resplendent a scant few hours later, when public visiting began.



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